

Retirement Policies

Department of Sociology

Duke University

The purpose of this document is to outline a general set of principles regarding the rights and expectations of emeritus faculty. A set of general principles should allow faculty members to better plan for the transition to emeritus status and for departmental officers to make plans for space, teaching options, and other resources for emeritus faculty who are interested in those resources.

To some extent, the rights and expectations of emeritus faculty are articulated in the Duke Faculty Handbook. A copy of those policies is appended to this report. The major issues addressed in the Faculty Handbook are the use of basic services such as computer services and libraries, parking (which is unaffected by the transition to emeritus if faculty wish to keep parking privileges), and principal investigator eligibility. The Duke Human Resources Website (<http://www.hr.duke.edu/benefits/>) provides additional information about health insurance options for retired faculty. Because that website does not provide some important information, the Retirement Committee has developed a guide to Health Insurance at 65 and Older. That document also is appended to this report.

In developing these guidelines, the Retirement Committee in the Sociology Department held one meeting with the departmental Executive Committee and worked closely with the Chair. The policies were then discussed and finalized at the December, 2013 faculty meeting. The policies are intended to achieve an appropriate balance between regularizing the rights and expectations of emeritus faculty, on the one hand, and leaving room for flexibility, on the other hand.

There are four departmental policies:

Office Space

To the extent possible, the department wishes to make office space available to emeritus faculty who maintain a presence in the department. At the same time, senior faculty often occupy the “prime” departmental offices and to sustain that appropriate tradition, emeritus faculty will typically have to move to less attractive space. We recommend that emeritus faculty be given one year post-retirement to prepare for moving to less attractive space. The new space typically will be smaller than their previous offices and shared space is possible. We recognize that emeritus faculty members remain involved in professional activities, including external grants, serving on dissertation committees, and teaching, to varying degrees. The chair will consider emeritus faculty’s degree of involvement in departmental and scholarly activities when arranging for new office space, but will have to make decisions within the constraints of the space available.

Retirement Celebrations

It is appropriate that faculty transitioning to emeritus status be recognized for their many contributions to the department. In the past, some emeritus faculty members have had events to honor them and others have not. The cost of retirement events also has varied. We propose that the departmental budget include \$2,500 for each retirement party. This amount can be adjusted for inflation as necessary. It is our sense that this amount of money will support a pleasant event with high-quality food and drink. Whether or not to have a retirement celebration will be the decision of the retiring faculty member. We hope that all faculty members transitioning to emeritus status will choose to let the department honor them and thank them for their contributions. We also propose that retirement celebrations be held locally. Holding retirement events at American Sociological Association meetings has proven to be very expensive and a logistical nightmare.

Departmental Resources

We propose that basic office needs for emeritus faculty members will be met by the department (e.g., office supplies, computers, copying). However, staff time will generally not be available to emeritus faculty. We have an excellent staff, but their duties to regular rank faculty typically meet the limits of their time. If an emeritus professor has need for staff time, approval by the chair will be required. Other, more limited resources, such as travel funds, will be reserved for regular rank faculty.

Participation in Faculty Meetings

Emeritus faculty members have experience and wisdom that can be very helpful in discussing issues in faculty meetings. Although emeritus faculty members are not eligible to vote at faculty meetings, we have no desire to preclude the department from profiting from that experience and wisdom. At the same time, however, governance of the department is the responsibility of regular rank faculty. We propose that emeritus faculty members be welcome at faculty meetings, but also ask that they respect the importance of full participation and self-governance by regular rank faculty.